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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 001277

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [OTRA](#) [PGOV](#) [SW](#)
SUBJECT: SWEDEN'S DEFENSE MINISTER ON AFGHANISTAN, BUDGET
BATTLES, INTERNATIONAL DEPLOYMENTS

REF: A. HELSINKI 753
[1](#)B. STOCKHOLM 1239
[1](#)C. STOCKHOLM 1101
[1](#)D. STATE 140269

Classified By: Ambassador Wood, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (c) During a one-on-one October 15 meeting, Minister of Defense Tolgfors told Ambassador:

-- Finland proposed the possibility of a rotation of the leadership of the PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif Afghanistan. Sweden did not see this as a way of removing itself from its obligation there.

-- Sweden's defense budget cuts do not signal a new direction. Sweden remains committed to doubling its international operation deployments. Proposed budget cuts are directed at expensive projects for production and acquisition of hardware not appropriate for defense priorities.

-- Ministry of Defense role in Defense issues has not been diminished by recent resignations over budget disputes and the Defense Ministry, not the Finance Ministry, continues to be prime on defense issues.

End Summary

Defense Priorities

[1](#)2. (c) Ambassador met October 15 with Sweden's new Minister of Defense Sten Tolgfors (ref B), at the invitation of the Minister. Tolgfors told the Ambassador Sweden has two goals for its defense. First, to double its capabilities for international operations; second, to buy more efficiently, ensuring that what is sought and procured corresponds to requirements for military priorities.

Afghanistan PRT

[1](#)3. (C) Tolgfors confirmed that Finland proposed the possibility of a rotation of the leadership of the PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif Afghanistan. Sweden received this proposal positively since it showed continued Nordic cooperation and increased Finnish contribution to Afghanistan. Sweden did not see this as a way of removing itself from or reducing its obligation there. (Comment: Helsinki reports -- ref A -- that the Finns have heard from the Swedes that Sweden may reduce its forces in the PRT for budgetary reasons. Both Tolgfors and MFA PolDir Lyrvall -- ref B -- have assured us that any adjustment in the ratio of Swedish/Finnish forces in Afghanistan will be in the context of enhancing Nordic

cooperation and that Sweden has no intention of withdrawing from Afghanistan.)

14. (c) Regarding overall international operations, Tolgfors said that the goal was to double from the current level of under 1,000 troops deployed abroad to more than 2,000. In the event that Sweden was called upon to deploy the EU Nordic Battle Group, which it leads, Sweden's contribution of troops abroad would more than treble, counting the over 2000 Swedish troops in the Battle Group. Tolgfors said his goal was to expand the use of the Airforce and Navy in international deployments, rather than concentrating on Army troops, which is the current model. (Comment: we note that consistent with this priority, the contingent Sweden plans to furnish to the EU CFSP deployment in Chad will consist of 200 Marine Riflemen. End Comment.)

15. (c) Regarding the budget reductions, Tolgfors said he was able after his appointment as Minister of Defense (ref C) to decrease the size of defense budget reductions by about 150 million USD, resulting in total projected defense budget cuts through 2010 of 300-450 million USD, largely concentrated in hardware not relevant to Defense's current international missions.

MNF-I Coalition Conference on Iraq

16. (c) Ambassador also raised with Tolgfors Sweden's invitation to the Bahrain October 29-31 MNF-I Coalition Conference on Iraq (ref D). Tolgfors said he would look into it. MFA PolDir Lyrvall's assistant told us October 15 a decision on participation was still pending.

Comment

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17. (C) USEMB Stockholm perceives Tolgfors objectives at this meeting as threefold: First, to reassure that Tolgfors and his Ministry are in charge of defense matters and that they are not unduly influenced by the Finance Minister as a result of the recent resignations of the top two Ministry officials over a budget dispute; Second, to clarify what Tolgfors perceived to be misrepresentations in the media of the true nature of the Defense cuts; Finally, that Sweden continues to be committed to long-term participation in internationally sanctioned peacekeeping activities.
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